



US 20140211298A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication**

Sayyah et al.

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2014/0211298 A1**

(43) **Pub. Date: Jul. 31, 2014**

(54) **TUNABLE OPTICAL METAMATERIAL**

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

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CPC *G02F 1/29* (2013.01); *H01L 31/02161* (2013.01)

USPC **359/298**; 438/69

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A tunable metamaterial has a two dimensional array of resonant annular ring elements; and a plurality of voltage controllable electrical tuning elements disposed in or adjacent openings in each of said ring elements, each of said voltage controllable electrical tuning element ohmically contacting portions of only one of said ring elements. The voltage controllable electrical tuning elements may comprise highly doped semiconductor tunnel diodes, or the charge accumulation layer at the semiconductor/insulator interface of a metal-insulator-semiconductor structure, or nanoelectromechanical (NEMs) capacitors. The tunable metamaterial may be used, for example, in an optical beam steering device using the aforementioned tunable optical metamaterial in which a free-space optical beam is coupled into a receiving portion of a plane of the optical metamaterial and is steered out of a transmitter portion of the plane of the optical metamaterial in controllable azimuthal and elevational directions. The tunable metamaterial additionally has other applications.

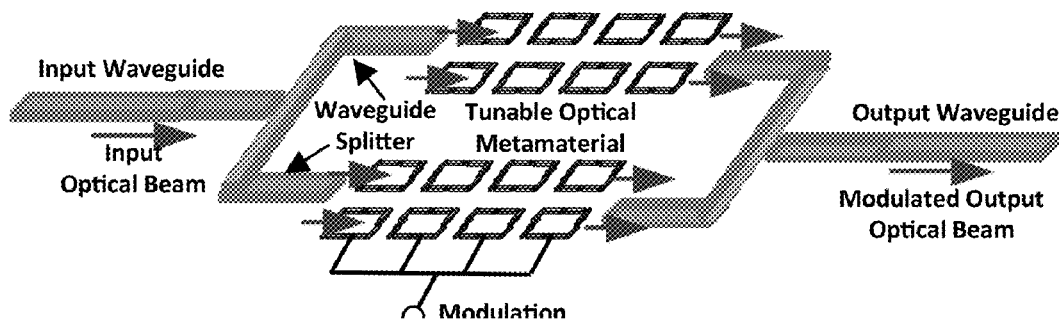
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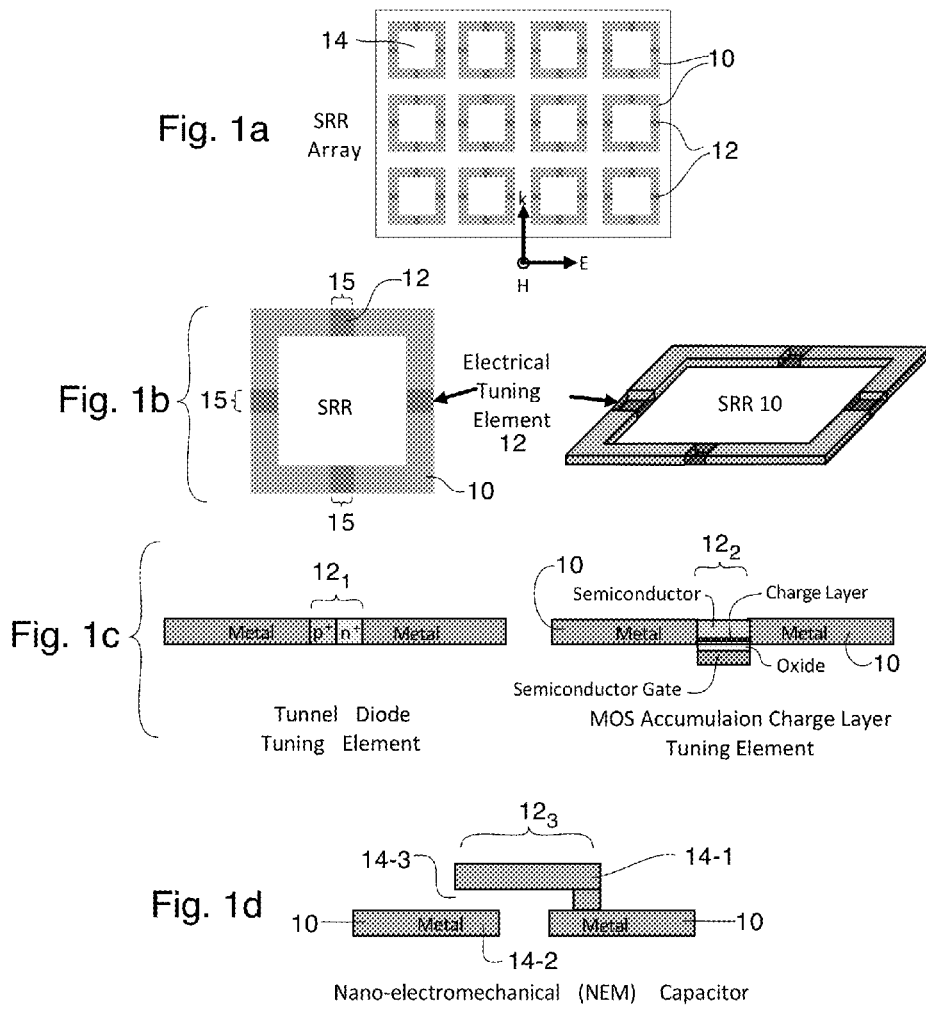
(21) Appl. No.: **13/754,140**

(22) Filed: **Jan. 30, 2013**

Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**
G02F 1/29 (2006.01)
H01L 31/0216 (2006.01)





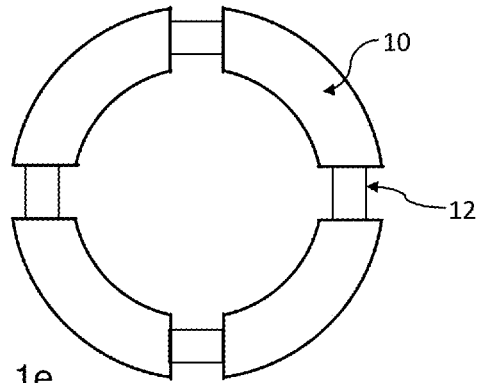


Fig. 1e

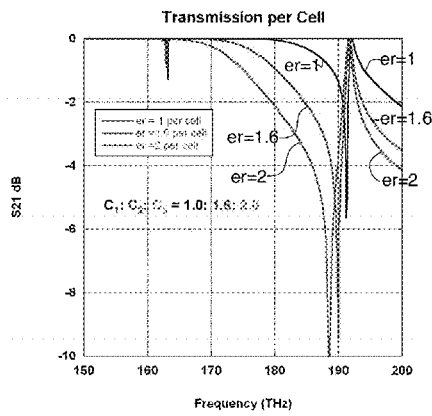


Fig. 2a

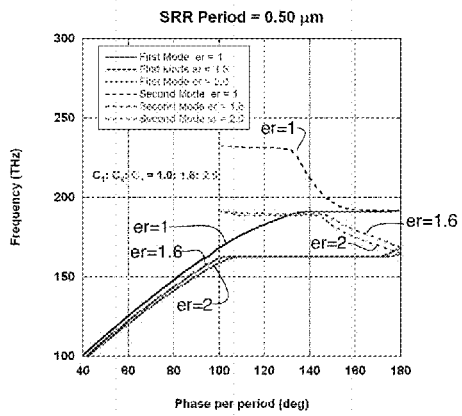


Fig. 2b

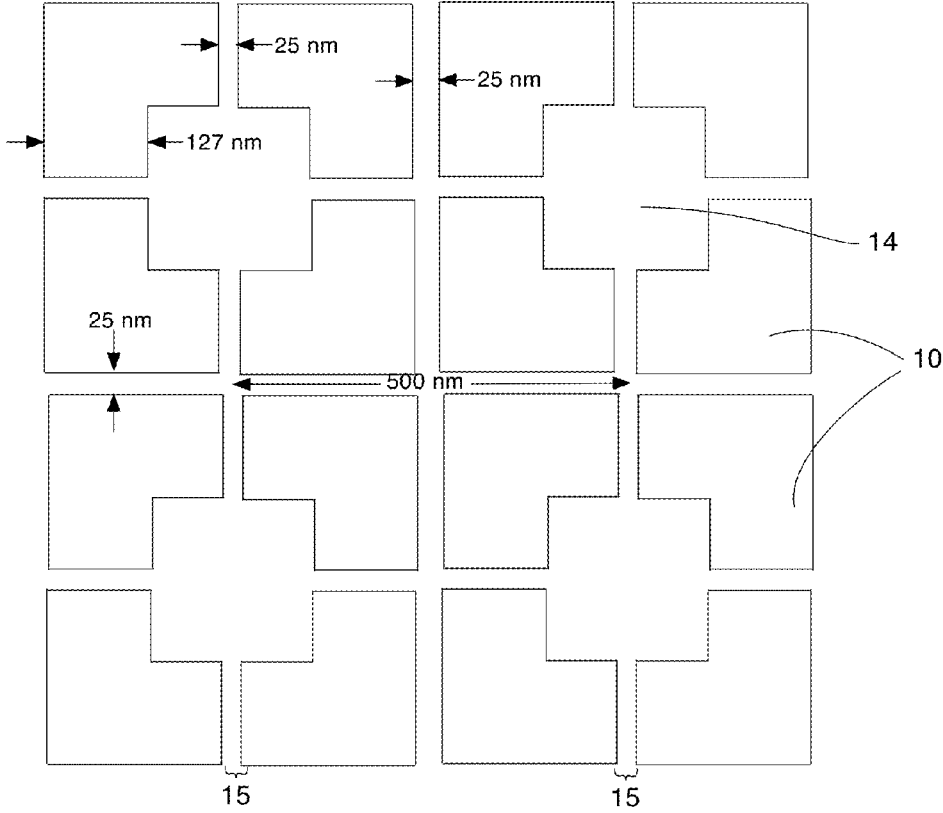


Fig. 2c

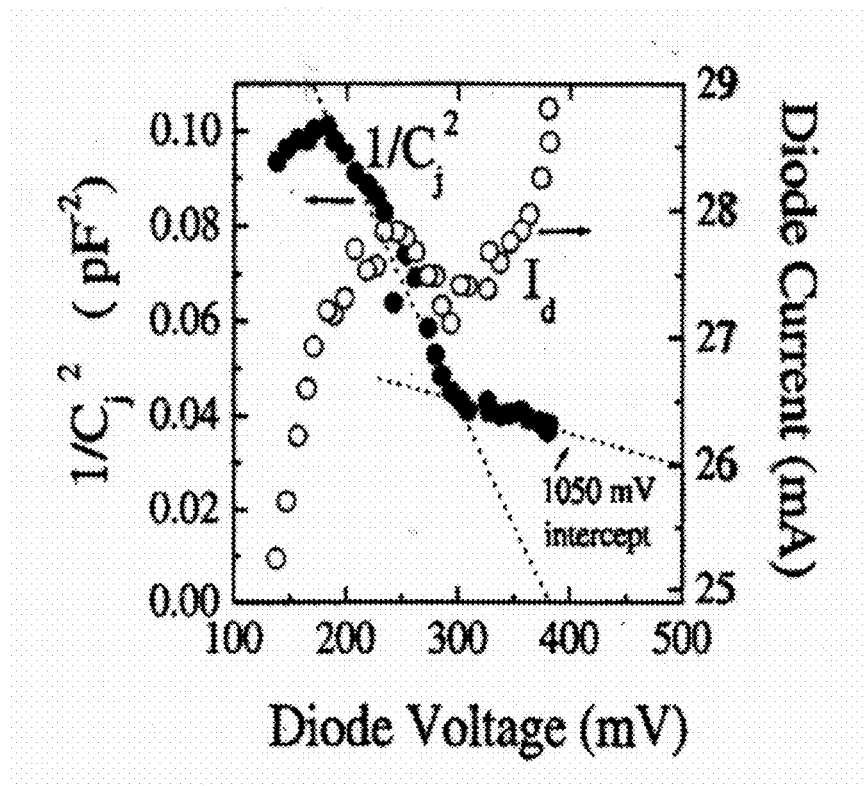


Fig. 3

Fig 3. Junction capacitance and current of a p⁺n⁺ tunnel diode as a function of its bias voltage.

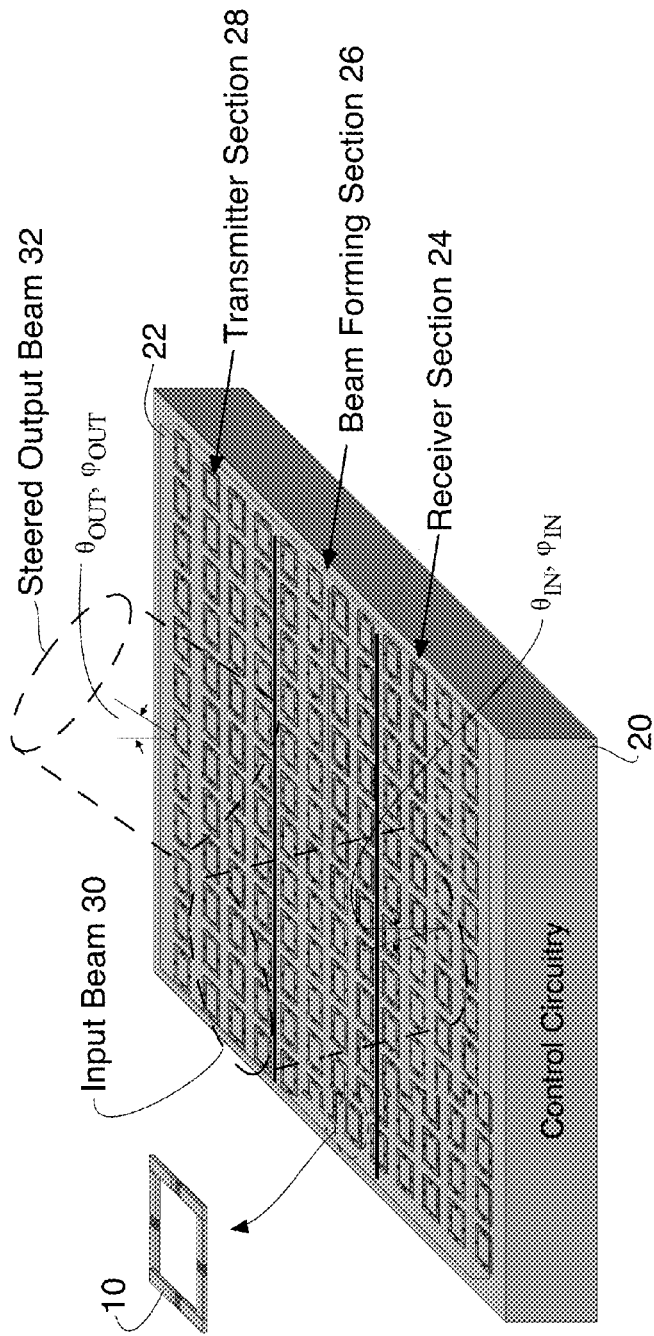


Fig. 4

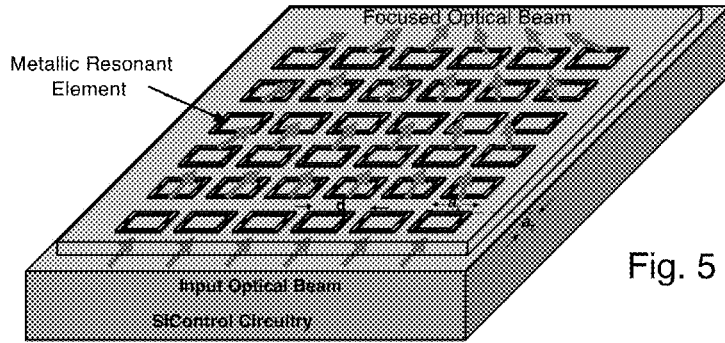


Fig. 5

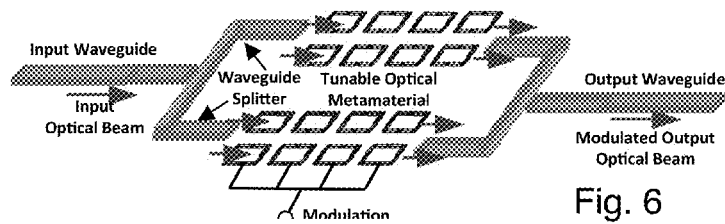


Fig. 6

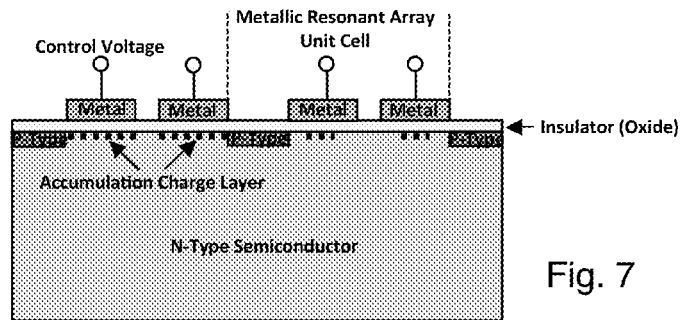
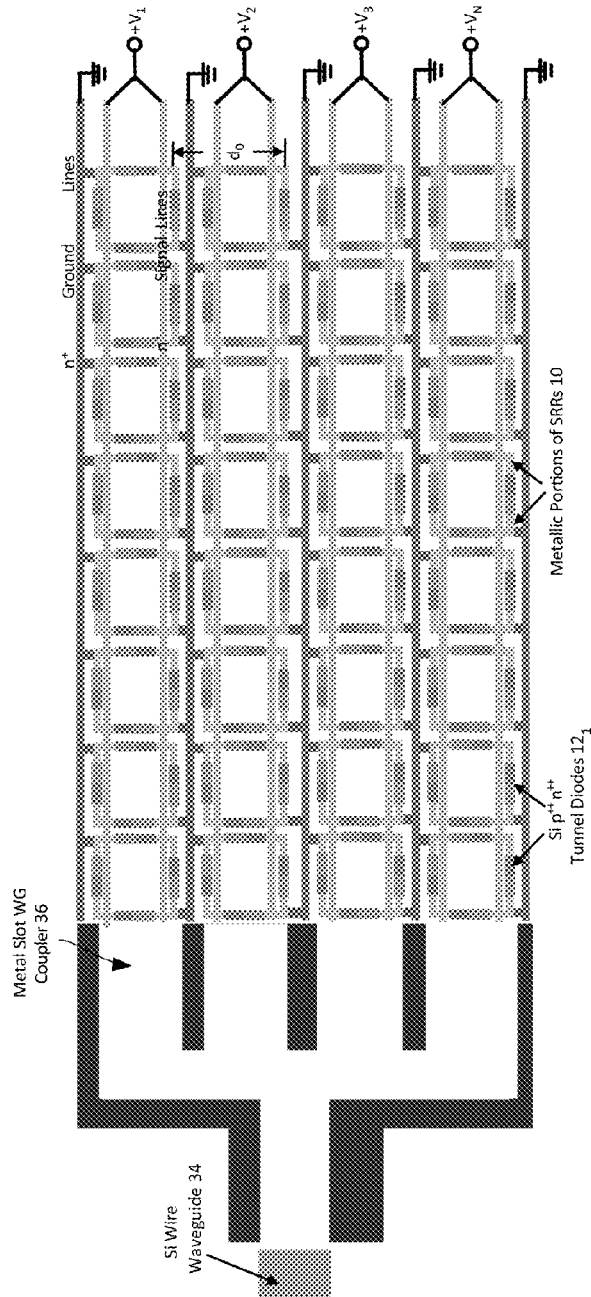


Fig. 7



V_n G V_n
G V_n
Fig. 8a

Fig. 8

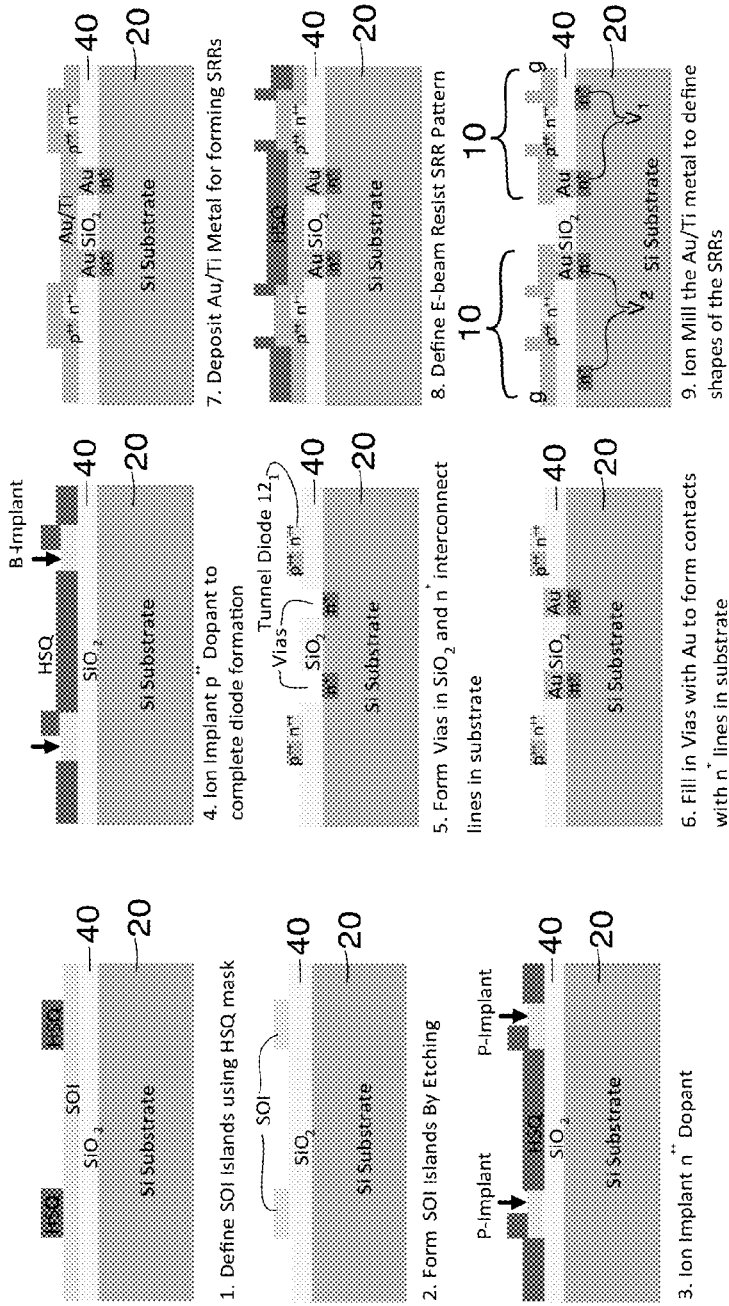


Fig. 9

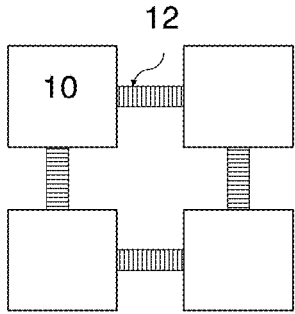


Fig. 10a

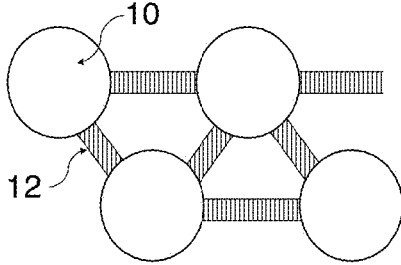
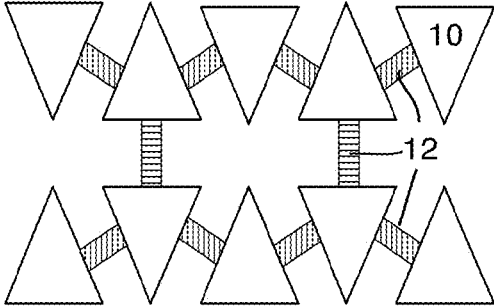


Fig. 10b

Fig. 10c



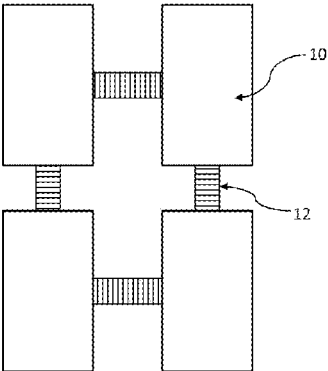


Fig. 10d

(d)

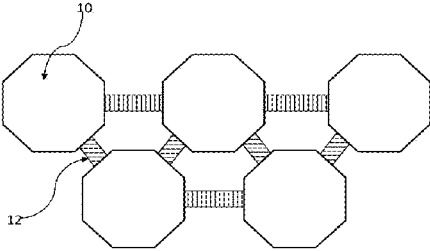
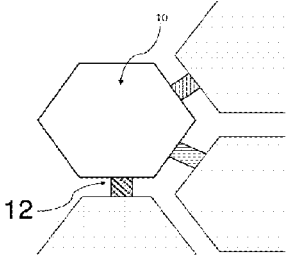


Fig. 10e

(e)

Fig. 10f



(f)

TUNABLE OPTICAL METAMATERIAL

Cross Reference to Related Applications

[0001] None

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] This invention is about a tunable optical metamaterial whose effective refractive index can be spatially programmed, in two dimensions, resulting in an artificial material with a tunable index profile. The disclosed metamaterial can be used in a number of applications, including optical beam steering, optical modulation, and optical beam shaping.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Optical beam steerers are known in the prior art. A liquid crystal-based optical phased array (LC-OPA) may be the current the state-of-the-art in optical beam steering devices. See P. F. McManamon et. al., *Proceedings of IEEE*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (1996) p. 268. It consists of a liquid crystal (LC) cell with one-dimensional patterned transparent conductor strips in which each strip defines an element of the linear array. For beam steering in the two azimuthal and elevational directions, two such LC cells are arranged in orthogonal orientations.

[0004] LC-OPA is a fairly mature technology with very low power consumption due to the capacitive nature of the liquid crystal. However, the disadvantage of the LC-OPA is its slow steering speed (10's of ms range) which is due to the slow response time of the LC-based phase shifting elements. Another disadvantage of liquid crystals is their limited temperature operation range. At low temperatures (<0° C.) the LC response time significantly degrades due to its increased viscosity, while at higher temperatures (>50° C.) it becomes isotropic and hence loses functionality. Consequently, for practical purposes, the operating temperature of the LC-OPA should be externally controlled, which further adds to its complexity of having two separate LC cells assembled in tandem for 2-D beam steering.

[0005] The other problem with LC-OPA is the presence of grating lobes in the steered beam, which not only severely reduces the optical efficiency of the phased array but also requires complex signal detection circuitry. In order to eliminate grating lobes in phased arrays, the spacing between array elements must be less than the wavelength of the steered optical beam. In LC-OPAs, the array elements (strip width) are in the range of 5 to 10 μm, and hence larger than the wavelength of the optical beam in the visible and near-IR region. Reducing the strip width below 5 μm results in a significant field fringing effect, and hence decreased electro-optic efficiency, since the thickness of the LC cell is about 4 μm.

[0006] Another prior art beam steering approach is based on the use of integrated AlGaAs waveguide arrays on a GaAs substrate in which each array element is a tunable phase shifter. See F. Vasey, et. al., *Applied Optics*, Vol. 32 (1993) p. 3220. The phase tuning is achieved via the linear electro-optic effect in the material by forming a heterojunction barrier with a low resistivity transparent conductor (indium-tin-oxide) cladding layer.

[0007] The main problem with integrated AlGaAs waveguide array approach is the rather limited phase delay achievable with these tunable waveguides due to a weak electro-optic effect. Waveguide lengths of more than 3 mm

are required in order to obtain a 2π phase delay at 850 nm. Also, similar to the LC-OPA described above, this phased array will also have grating lobes, since the minimum width of the waveguides (about 2.5 μm) is a factor of two to three larger than the operating wavelength.

[0008] In contrast, a phased array beam steerer based on the disclosed tunable metamaterial disclosed hereon does not suffer from grating lobes since the spacing of the waveguide array can be as small as the unit cell dimension, which is about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the wavelength. Furthermore, since tunable phase shifts of $0-2\pi$ can be achieved between adjacent array elements with array spacing of less than half the wavelength, the steering angle of this novel beam steerer can approach $0-90^\circ$ in both azimuthal and elevational directions, which is significantly larger than those achievable with the LC-OPA and the AlGaAs waveguide devices mentioned above.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0009] A tunable optical metamaterial includes an array of resonant metallic elements with one or more voltage controllable electrical tuning elements within each resonant metallic element. The voltage controllable electrical tuning elements may comprise highly doped semiconductor tunnel diodes, or the charge accumulation layer at the semiconductor/insulator interface of a metal-insulator-semiconductor structure, or nanoelectromechanical (NEMs) capacitors.

[0010] In another aspect the present invention relates to an optical beam steering device using the aforementioned tunable optical metamaterial in which a free-space optical beam is coupled into a receiving portion of a plane of the optical metamaterial and is steered out of a transmitter portion of the plane of the optical metamaterial in controllable azimuthal and elevational directions.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] FIGS. 1a-1d depict a two dimensional (2D) array of metallic resonant structures with three different possible embodiments of the electrical tuning elements used therein.

[0012] FIG. 1e depicts another embodiment of metallic resonant structure of FIG. 1b.

[0013] FIGS. 2a, 2b and 2c relate to SRR. FIGS. 2a and 2b are graphs of dispersion characteristics and optical loss characteristics of a SRR-band optical metamaterial with a period of 400 nm, with gaps and spacing dimensions of 50 nm. FIG. 2c depicts an embodiment of a four-opening square shaped SRR.

[0014] FIG. 3 is a graph of measured junction capacitance-voltage and current-voltage characteristics of a p⁺n⁺Si tunnel diode as a function of its bias voltage.

[0015] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a chip-scale optical beam steering device in which the effective optical index of the metamaterial can be programmed for each unit cell to result in the azimuthal and elevational steering of a beam incident on a receiving portion, and propagating along its surface towards a transmitting section in which the beam is out coupled into free space at a desired azimuthal and elevational direction.

[0016] FIG. 5 is a schematic diagram depicting a generalized scheme for an in-plane graded-index (GRIN) lens implemented using the tunable optical metamaterial structure disclosed herein.

[0017] FIG. 6 shows a schematic of the generalized scheme for an in-plane Mach-Zender optical modulator implemented using the tunable optical metamaterial structure.

[0018] FIG. 7 shows a schematic of a generalized scheme for tuning the optical metamaterial based on an array of metallic resonant elements using the modulation of induced surface charge layers at the interface of the metal-insulator-semiconductor (MIS) or metal-oxide-semiconductor (MOS) structure formed below the resonant array.

[0019] FIGS. 8 and 8a depicts one embodiment of how bias lines can be routed to the split ring resonator (SRR) array.

[0020] FIG. 9 shows a cross-section of one element in the array during different fabrication steps which may be used to form an array of SRRs 10 and their buried bias lines.

[0021] FIGS. 10a-10f depict embodiments where the metallic resonant structures are implemented as solid metallic patches sized to be resonant at optical frequencies.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0022] The tunable optical metamaterial is composed of a two-dimensional array of sub-wavelength-scale resonant metallic structures 10 with integrated nano-scale voltage-controllable electrical tuning elements 12 disposed in the sides thereof in an exemplary embodiment as shown in FIG. 1a. The metallic unit-cell structures 10 are preferably disposed on a dielectric substrate 20 for support and are designed to have electrical resonances preferably at optical frequencies (i.e. electromagnetic radiation having a wavelength longer than 0.4 microns (blue/violet end of the visible spectrum) and shorter than 0.3 mm (1 terahertz frequency)), which can be achieved by reducing their dimensions to sub-micron scales. If the metallic unit-cell structures 10 are to be used at lower optical frequencies (such infrared, terahertz), then their sizes may be increased accordingly.

[0023] There are a number of metallic structures 10 that have electrical resonances at optical frequencies such as metallic split-ring resonators (SRR) and metallic patches. FIG. 1a shows a two dimensional (2-D) array of metallic SRRs 10 wherein each metallic SSR is formed by a ring of metal shaped in a geometric configuration with openings 15 which occur in the side walls of each SRR 10. In the embodiment of FIG. 1a, the SSR assumes a square shape, having a square shaped exterior and a square shaped interior opening 14. Since the SSR in the embodiment of FIG. 1a is square shaped, it has four side walls and each side wall has an opening 15 preferably located in the mid point of each side wall. The openings 15 in the four side walls of the SRRs 10 each receive one of the electrical tuning elements 12 which makes ohmic contact with the otherwise exposed ends of the metallic side wall at the openings 15.

[0024] FIG. 1b shows a single SRR 10 in a plan view (on the left hand side of the figure, where three of the four openings are called out by a reference numeral 15) and in a perspective view (on the right hand side of that figure). In this embodiment, each SRR 10 has a square shape with four equal-length side walls, with each side wall having the aforementioned opening 15 therein for receiving the electrical tuning elements 12 disposed therein. The electrical tuning elements 12 make electrical contact with the immediately abutting metal surfaces of the openings in the side walls of each SRR 10. There is preferably a single opening 15 in each of the four sides of the square-shaped SRR depicted in FIGS. 1a and 1b.

[0025] The SSR 10 do not have to be shaped as a square as other geometric shapes can be useful in certain applica-

tions. For example, a rectangular shape may be used instead. In such an embodiment, a two dimensional (2-D) array of metallic rectangularly shaped SRRs would have electrical resonances at two different dispersion characteristics in two orthogonal directions (assuming all of the rectangularly shaped SRRs had the same identical shape, size and relative orientation to one another). Other geometric shapes for the SRRs can be alternatively used (see, for example, FIG. 1e where the side walls are basically of a circular configuration) and the shapes, their sizes and orientation relative to each other can be mixed if desired. The two dimensional (2-D) array of metallic rectangularly shaped SRRs should be supported relative to each other and therefore are preferably disposed directly on the dielectric surface 20 as shown in FIG. 1a. The dielectric surface 20 is omitted from FIGS. 1b-1e for ease of illustration. If the support surface 20 is lossy at the frequencies of interest, then a suitable non-lossy insulating layer (see the SiO₂ layer 40 of FIG. 9 for example) may be used between the substrate 20 and the array of SRRs 10. The SRRs may be embedded in a dielectric material if desired.

[0026] Only twelve SRRs 10 are depicted in the array of FIG. 1a, but it is to be understood that the size of the array would typically be very large in terms of the numbers of SSRs 10 deployed in the array and only twelve SRRs 10 are depicted in the array of FIG. 1a simply for ease of illustration.

[0027] Three different possible embodiments of the electrical tuning elements 12 are depicted in FIGS. 1c and 1d which are implemented by: (1) voltage dependent capacitance of p⁺n⁺ tunnel diodes 12₁ (see the left hand side of FIG. 1c), (2) voltage dependent conductance of MOS accumulation layers 12₂ (see the right hand side of FIG. 1c), and (3) voltage dependent capacitance of nanoelectromechanical (NEMs) capacitors 12₃ (see FIG. 1d). SRRs 10 can have resonance frequencies up to 500 THz (600 nm optical wavelength) by simply reducing their dimensions to about 60 nm on a side. This is due to the fact that these structures can be electrically represented as a series LC circuit whose resonance frequency is inversely proportional to (LC)^{1/2}. Reducing the physical dimension of the SRR 10 reduces its electrical inductance, hence increasing the resonance frequency.

[0028] By arranging these resonant SRRs 10 in a two dimensional (2D) planar array, for example, a new type of metamaterial with unique dispersion characteristics can be obtained. This metamaterial is different than conventional dielectric-based photonic crystals since its unit cell size, as measured along a side of the SRR, is smaller than $\lambda/2$, as shown below, where λ is the free-space wavelength of light that is coupled to and/or propagates along the SRR array surface. The dispersion (ω -k) characteristic of this metamaterial is highly nonlinear with slow light group velocity saturation. Furthermore, the dispersion characteristics can be tailored by either changing the geometrical or electrical parameters of the resonant unit cell structure. For example, by varying the capacitance in the gap regions of the SRR 10 with voltage controllable elements 12 (see FIGS. 1a-1e), the dispersion characteristics of the 2D metamaterial can be tuned and hence modulate its effective index.

[0029] FIG. 2a shows the dispersion characteristics of a particular embodiment of a four-opening square shaped SRR 10, simulated using a finite-element method (FEM), with the particular embodiment of a square shaped SRR 10 with four openings 15, each square shaped SSR 10 having a unit cell dimension of 500 nm disposed on a silica substrate 20 ($\epsilon=2.14$) for three different capacitance values with relative values

of 1:1.6:2 in the gap (corresponding to $\epsilon_r=1, 1.6,$ and 2 in FIG. 2a). The thickness and width of each SRR **10** is 127 nm, and the gap dimensions are 25 nm each for this particular embodiment, which is shown in greater detail in FIG. 2c. The SRRs **10** are assumed to be made of metallic silver in this simulation due to silver's low optical losses, but other materials may be used if desired. The electrical tuning element used in this simulation was simply a dielectric with variable dielectric constant to emulate a variable capacitor. The dielectric constant was varied by 60% and 100% compared to the original value, hence, relative capacitance values of 1.0, 1.6, and 2.0, as shown in the graphs. A widely accepted Drude model was used to emulate the complex dielectric constant of silver in this simulation. FIG. 2a shows the ω -k dispersion characteristics for this metamaterial for the first two propagating modes. As the simulation results indicate, this metamaterial has highly nonlinear dispersion that almost saturates at higher phase delay (wave vector) values, depicting very slow light behavior. There are two possible regions in the dispersion diagram for operation as a very efficient optical phase shifter. The first region is at an optical frequency of about 170 THz using the first propagating mode of the metamaterial. The simulation results indicate that gap capacitance variations in the ratio of 1.6:1 and 2:1 result in effective index changes of 0.10 and 0.13, respectively. Concurrently shown in FIG. 2b is the optical loss of the same metamaterial as a function of frequency of the propagating mode. We note that at the propagating mode frequency of 170 THz, the optical loss is negligible which makes this mode of operation very practical. With an effective index change of 0.1, an optical phase shifter of about 15 μm in length based on this implementation of the tunable metamaterial can provide continuous 0-2 π phase shift required for a beam steering device.

[0030] The second region of operation is at an optical frequency of about 192 THz using the second propagating mode of the metamaterial, as shown with the dotted lines in FIG. 2b. The simulation results indicate an effective index change of 0.46 and 0.61 for gap capacitance variations in the ratio of 1.6:1 and 2:1, respectively. An optical phase shifter of about 2.5 μm in length operating at this frequency can provide continuous 0-2 π phase shift using the tunable metamaterial design described above. However, this mode has a propagation loss of about 2 dB/ μm , which translates into a loss of 5 dB for the 2.5 μm long optical phase shifter. Thus, a trade-off exists between the two propagating modes in terms of the length of the phase shifting device and its optical loss. The second mode has a negative slope in the ω -k diagram, indicating a negative effective index, which can be used for other potential applications. It should be noted here that the above design is just one example of the tunable optical metamaterial proposed here, and by no means the most optimum one. Also, the dispersion characteristics shown in this simulation can be modified for other operating optical frequencies by scaling the dimensions of the SRR structure **10**.

[0031] In one embodiment, the tuning of the optical metamaterial is obtained by varying the capacitances of p⁺n⁺ tunnel diodes **12**, placed in the gaps **15** of the multi-cut SRR structures **10** using applied voltage to the diodes (see the "Tunnel Diode Tuning Element" embodiment of FIG. 1c). In order for these semiconductor-based capacitors (the p⁺n⁺ tunnel diodes **12**,) to operate at optical frequencies, the plasma frequency of the semiconductor should be higher than the operating frequency. This can be achieved by using heavily doped semiconductors. For example, plasma frequencies of

200-300 THz have been measured for InGaAs layers with doping levels in the range of $2\text{-}5 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. A Si layer with doping levels in the high- 10^{20} cm^{-3} will have plasma frequencies in the same range since the effective mass of Si is about 10 times higher than that of InGaAs, and the plasma frequency is proportional to the square-root of the ratio of the doping level to the effective mass of the semiconductor. Si is preferred due to the ability to make CMOS circuits, but III-V material systems may be substituted therefor if desired.

[0032] FIG. 3 shows the bias voltage dependence of a p⁺n⁺ tunnel diode capacitance in which the p and n regions have doping levels of $7 \times 10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ and $4 \times 10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-3}$, respectively. Possible dopants include boron and phosphorous, but other dopants may be used if desired and based on the material system utilized. The measured data indicates that the diode capacitance changes by a factor of about 1.6 for a bias voltage change of less than 200 mV. This capacitance change is used in FIGS. 2a and 2b for the simulation of the dispersion characteristics shift, and hence effective index change, and the optical loss in the example tunable metamaterial described above.

[0033] Another electrical tuning element **12** for the metamaterial SRR **10** includes a voltage-controllable sheet conductance in the SRR gaps **15** using high accumulation charge densities ($>10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-2}$) of MOS structures **12**₂ (see the "MOS Accumulation Charge Layer Tuning Element" embodiment of FIG. 1c). This will result in tuning the effective inductance of the SRR **10**, and hence the dispersion of the metamaterial. Yet another electrical tuning element is a nanoelectromechanical (NEMs) capacitor **12**₃ (see the "Nanoelectromechanical (NEM) Capacitor" embodiment of FIG. 1c) formed between a movable metallic cantilever **14**-1, a bottom metallic pad **14**-2, and an air gap **14**-3. Application of an appropriate voltage to the NEMs capacitor **12**₃ results in a change in the distance between the movable metallic cantilever **14**-1 and the fixed metallic pad **14**-2, hence varying its capacitance. One possible technique for routing these various voltages to the SRRs **10** is described below with reference to FIG. 8.

[0034] One application of the disclosed tunable optical metamaterial is a chip-scale optical beam steering device in which the effective optical index of the metamaterial can be programmed for each unit cell to result in the azimuthal and elevational steering of a beam propagating along its surface, as shown in FIG. 4.

[0035] FIG. 4 shows a schematic of a generalized scheme for a free-space optical beam steering and shaping device using the tunable optical metamaterial structure with a 2D array of SRRs **10** described above are disposed on a substrate **20** which preferably includes control circuitry. An Input optical beam is coupled to the metamaterial formed by SRRs **10** as a surface wave using the Receiver Section **24** shown in the FIG. 4. The Receiver Section **24** basically functions as a tunable incoupling grating structure which coherently scatters an incoming free-space optical beam **30** incident at an arbitrary angle (θ_{IN}, ϕ_{IN} —expressed here in spherical coordinates) into a surface wave that can controllably propagate along the tunable metamaterial surface in the In-Plane Beam Forming Section **26**. In the In-Plane Beam Forming Section **26**, the in-plane wavefront can be manipulated by appropriately programming the effective index of the SRR elements **10** in the propagation path. Examples of this wavefront manipulations are phase and amplitude modulation, or beam shaping. Finally, the manipulated in-plane wavefront is

coherently scattered into free-space at an arbitrary angle (θ_{OUT}, ϕ_{OUT} —expressed here in spherical coordinates) using the Transmitter Section 28, which, similar to the Receiver Section 24, functions as a tunable outcoupling grating structure. The Receiver Section 24, Beaming Section 26 and Transmitter Section 28 may be all covered, if desired, with a dielectric covering material 22 which is transmissive at the frequencies of interest. The control circuitry under the optical metamaterial, preferably formed using conventional CMOS technology in a Si substrate 20 in this embodiment, provides the tuning functionality to the individual metallic resonant elements of the metamaterial. Based on phased array theory, the steering angle of this device can be expressed as:

$$\sin\theta_0(V) = \frac{\Delta\phi_i(V) \lambda}{2\pi d} \quad (\text{Eqn. 1})$$

[0036] where $\theta_0(V)$ is the voltage controllable in-plane steering angle, $\Delta\phi_i(V)$ is the effective voltage dependent phase delay between adjacent elements of the phased array with a spacing d , and λ is the wavelength of the steered beam. In order to achieve beam steering approaching end-fire ($\pm 90^\circ$), a maximum phase delay of 2π among the array elements (SRRs 10) is required. Using the example metamaterial simulated above (see FIG. 2a) with a unit cell size (array spacing) of 500 nm and a gap spacing between SSRs 10 of approximately 50-75 nm, the effective phase delay at telecom frequencies ($\lambda=1550$ nm is a useful and commonly used telecom frequency) between adjacent SRRs for end-fire steering is $2\pi/3$, with three array elements (SRRs 10) between each 2π reset. The voltage controllable effective index change of 0.1 simulated for the example optical metamaterial described above with reference to FIGS. 2a-2c, results in a maximum phase delay of 2π using 30 unit cells in the propagation direction (15 μm long phase shifters). For steering at angles between 0 to 90° , the number of phase shifters (unit cells) between each 2π reset is varied resulting in the change of the slope of the linear phase change across the array elements. For example, by placing 30 phase shifters between each 2π reset, a steering angle of about 5° is achieved.

[0037] In phased arrays, grating lobes, which are maxima in the radiation patterns of the array besides the main desired lobe, occur at radiated angles θ given by $\pi d(\sin\theta - \sin\theta_0)/\lambda = \pm n\pi$ (where n is an integer). For the first grating lobe ($n=1$) to occur at the horizon (in the plane of the dielectric slab shown in FIG. 4), the condition $d < \lambda$ must be satisfied. Since the array spacing (unit cell dimension) of the metamaterial based phased array is a fraction of the wavelength ($< \lambda/3$ in the example above), this approach to optical beam steering will not result in grating lobes, and hence, will be very efficient since output power is not being diverted to undesirable grating lobes.

[0038] The number of resolvable steered beam positions in a phased array is given by $M = N\Delta\phi_m/\pi$, where N is the number of array elements and $\Delta\phi_m$ is the maximum available phase delay. For the metamaterial based phased array example give above, one can achieve 60 resolvable steering spots for a 30 element-long array in the propagation direction.

[0039] In-plane beam steering is achieved by having uniform effective index for each row of SSR elements 10 in the direction of beam propagation. However, by modulating the effective index for each row of SSR elements 10 in the direction of beam propagation, we can steer the beam out of the

plane of the 2-D metamaterial. We can regard this index modulation as an effective tunable optical grating, or alternatively, as a phased array of radiating antennas in the direction of propagation that radiates the beam into free-space. Assuming a maximum phase shift of 2π between the radiating elements, out-of-plane steering angles between 0 to 90° is achievable, similar to the in-plane steering described above. In-plane steering refers to the steering of the optical beam in the plane of the SRR 10 array and out-of-plane steering refers to the steering of the optical beam out of the plane of the SRR 10 and into free-space.

[0040] Besides optical beam steering, the tunable optical metamaterial disclosed herein can have other chip-scale functionalities such as in-plane beam forming and optical modulation. For example, by programming the effective index of the unit cells in a graded fashion, a graded-index (GRIN) lens with tunable focal length can be realized for on-chip shaping of an optical beam. Light can be applied to the surface as described with reference to either FIG. 5 or 8 below.

[0041] FIG. 5 is a schematic diagram depicting a generalized scheme for an in-plane graded-index (GRIN) lens implemented using the tunable optical metamaterial structure disclosed herein. An input optical beam is coupled to the metamaterial as a surface wave as shown in FIG. 5. By programming the effective indices of the individual rows of SRRs 10 according to

$$\Delta n(i) = \frac{-f + \sqrt{(ia_x)^2 + f^2}}{N_z a_z}$$

where i is the sequence number of the unit cell from the middle to the edges of the array along the x direction, f is the focal distance of the GRIN lens, a_z and a_x are the array spacings in the propagation (z) and perpendicular (x) directions, respectively, and N_z is the number of array elements in the propagation direction.

[0042] Another application for the tunable optical metamaterial is small foot-print ($< 5 \times 10 \mu\text{m}^2$) Mach-Zender optical modulators with modulation speeds exceeding 10 GHz using the tunable phase shifters described above for the beam steering application modified for a maximum of it-phase shift. Combining this small foot-print optical modulator with the phased array beam steerer results in yet another novel device which can receive a free-space CW optical beam, modulate its amplitude, and radiate it out in a different free-space direction.

[0043] FIG. 6 shows a schematic of the generalized scheme for an in-plane Mach-Zender optical modulator implemented using the tunable optical metamaterial structure. An input optical beam is coupled to the optical metamaterial via, for example, an optical waveguide. By uniformly changing the effective index of the tunable optical metamaterial, the propagating optical mode experiences an optical phase change, whose magnitude depends on the effective index change and the propagation length across the metamaterial. The phase modulated optical beam is then coupled to an output waveguide, hence forming an optical phase modulator. By implementing the tunable optical metamaterial in a Mach-Zender configuration, for example, an optical amplitude modulator is realized (shown in FIG. 6).

[0044] FIG. 7 shows the schematic of the generalized scheme for tuning the optical metamaterial based on an array

of metallic resonant elements using the modulation of induced surface charge layers at the interface of the metal-insulator-semiconductor (MIS) or metal-oxide-semiconductor (MOS) structure formed below the resonant array. The charge layers induced under each metallic segment of the array have preferably the same polarity as the semiconductor material—resulting accumulation charge layers are faster to switch in to and out of the interface compared to inversion charge layers which would be formed when the polarities of the charge layer and the semiconductor are of the opposite type. The magnitude of the accumulation layers induced under each metal segment of the array is controlled via the application of a corresponding voltage on the metal layer of the MIS structure, as shown in the Figure. Semiconductor regions with opposite polarity to that of the substrate are formed in the space between neighboring array elements (P-type regions shown in the Figure) in order to prevent the diffusion of the induced accumulation layer charge between the elements. The accumulation charge density induced under the metallic segments within each unit cell will diffuse laterally and result in a change in the effective inductance of the array element. This, in turn, results in the local tuning of the resonant frequency of the array, and hence its dispersion characteristics and effective index profile.

[0045] FIG. 8 depicts one embodiment of how the bias lines may be routed to the SRR 10 array. As this top view figure indicates, there are two sets of bias lines that run horizontally across the SRR array—the first set is connected to the drive signals $V_1 \dots V_N$ (which can be DC or AC), and the second set is connected to ground. These bias lines connect to the metallic portions of the SRRs 10, as shown. A tuning element (preferably a tunnel diode 12₁) is placed in each of the four openings 12 (see FIG. 1b for example) of the SRRs 10. The tuning elements 12 can be a nano-scale varactor (such as a n⁺p⁺ tunnel diode 12₁), a device 12₂ utilizing the voltage dependent conductance of MIS accumulation layers or a NEMs variable capacitor 12₃. The two sets of bias lines are alternately connected to the two terminals of the tuning elements 12₁ as shown. If tuning elements 12₂ are used instead, then additional bias lines may be utilized. In the preferred embodiment, the bias lines are heavily doped n⁺ strips (formed preferably by ion implantation) that are either buried (see the lines for drive signals $V_1 \dots V_N$) or otherwise spaced from the SRRs 10 (see the ground lines) in the underlying Si substrate 20 of the silicon-on-insulator (SOI) structure on top of which the SRRs 10 are formed. FIG. 9 shows a the cross-section of one element in the array during fabrication steps 1-9 involved to form an array of SRRs 10 and their buried bias lines, for more clarity of understanding.

[0046] In FIG. 9, silicon and silicon dioxide are used for substrate 20 and insulating layer 40 respectively. Of course other semiconductor materials may be substituted for the silicon and other insulating materials may be substituted for (or used in addition to) silicon dioxide. Likewise other electrical conductors may be used in lieu of or in addition to those described above and in the drawings.

[0047] As shown in FIG. 8a, each SRR 10 in FIG. 8 has its four metallic elements either connected to either ground (G) or to one of the bias lines $V_1 \dots V_N$ (generically indicated by V_n in FIG. 8a).

[0048] Also shown in FIG. 8 is an embodiment of how an input light is coupled to the array of SRRs 10 through an input Si waveguide 34, which in turn is coupled to a metal slot waveguide coupler 36. The direction of light propagation is

from left to right in FIG. 8. Once the light reaches the end of the SRR array, it is in-plane steered in the direction perpendicular to the propagation direction. For out-coupling into free-space, a second tunable SRR array can be placed following this array, which functions as a variable out-coupling grating structure for steering in the vertical (out-of-plane) direction.

[0049] This embodiment of the optical metamaterial tuning array can be realized by first forming regions of opposite polarity to the semiconductor substrate 20 material in the space between the array elements 10, preferably, by ion implantation. Alternately, these regions can be formed by first depositing a semiconductor layer with opposite polarity on top of the substrate, and then etching it away every where except in these regions. Next, the insulator or oxide layer of the MIS (MOS) structure is deposited, followed by the deposition and patterning the metallic structure of the array by etching or a lift-off process.

[0050] FIGS. 10a through 10f show embodiments where the metallic structures 10 are solid metallic patches without the openings shown in FIG. 1a for example. In these embodiments the patches are sized to be resonant at optical frequencies and the capacitive elements 12 connected between neighboring patches 10 are implemented as semiconductor devices (such as the tunnel diodes or MOS devices shown in FIG. 1c).

[0051] Having described this invention in connection with a preferred embodiment thereof, further modification will now suggest itself to those skilled in the art. The invention is therefore not to be limited to the disclosed embodiments except as specifically required by the appended claims.

1. A tunable metamaterial comprising:
 - a two dimensional array of resonant annular ring elements; and
 - a plurality of voltage controllable electrical tuning elements disposed in or adjacent openings in each of said ring elements, each of said voltage controllable electrical tuning element ohmically contacting portions of only one of said ring elements.
2. The tunable metamaterial of claim 1 wherein the openings in each of said ring elements are spaced equidistantly within each ring.
3. The tunable metamaterial of claim 2 wherein the resonant annular ring elements have a rectilinear shape in a cross section thereof.
4. The tunable metamaterial of claim 3 wherein the resonant annular ring elements have a rectilinear shape when viewed in a plan view thereof.
5. The tunable metamaterial of claim 1 wherein the resonant annular ring elements are square shaped with four side walls, each side wall having an opening therein for receiving one of said plurality of tuning elements.
6. The tunable metamaterial of claim 5 wherein the resonant annular ring elements are disposed on a dielectric surface.
7. The tunable metamaterial of claim 6 wherein said dielectric surface is disposed on a semiconductor surface.
8. The tunable metamaterial of claim 7 wherein said semiconductor surface includes conductive lines formed therein for applying controls voltages to said plurality of voltage controllable electrical tuning elements.
9. The tunable metamaterial of claim 8 wherein said plurality of voltage controllable electrical tuning elements comprise a plurality of tunnel diodes formed in said semiconductor surface.

10. The tunable metamaterial of claim **8** wherein said plurality of voltage controllable electrical tuning elements comprise a plurality of devices formed in said semiconductor surface, said devices utilizing voltage dependent conductance of MIS accumulation layers.

11. The tunable metamaterial of claim **10** wherein said tuning elements comprise a plurality of MOS accumulation charge devices formed in said semiconductor surface.

12. The tunable metamaterial of claim **1** wherein the resonant annular ring elements are circularly shaped with multiple curved side walls, each curved side wall having an opening therein for receiving one of said plurality of tuning elements.

13. The tunable metamaterial of claim **1** wherein said plurality of voltage controllable electrical tuning elements are selected from the group consisting of tunnel diodes, MOS accumulation charge devices and nano-electromechanical capacitors.

14. The tunable metamaterial of claim **1** wherein said two dimensional array of resonant annular ring elements are resonant at optical frequencies (electromagnetic radiation having a wavelength longer than 0.4 microns and shorter than 0.3 mm) and responsive to light impinging said two dimensional array of resonant annular ring elements.

15. A tunable optical metamaterial including an array of resonant metallic elements which are resonant to electromagnetic radiation having a wavelength longer than 0.4 microns and shorter than 0.3 mm, each of the resonant metallic elements in said array having one or more voltage controllable electrical tuning elements disposed within each resonant metallic element.

16. The tunable optical metamaterial of claim **15** wherein the voltage controllable electrical tuning elements comprise highly doped semiconductor tunnel diodes, or the charge accumulation layer at a semiconductor/insulator interface of a metal-insulator-semiconductor structure.

17. The tunable optical metamaterial of claim **15** wherein each resonant metallic element has a square, annular shape with four sides, each side having an opening therein for accommodating one of said voltage controllable electrical tuning elements.

18. An optical beam steering device comprising the tunable optical metamaterial of claim **15** in which a free-space optical beam is coupled into a receiving portion of a plane of the optical metamaterial of claim **15** and is steered out of a transmitter portion of the plane of the optical metamaterial of claim **15** in controllable azimuthal and elevational directions.

19. A method of making a tunable optical metamaterial comprising the steps of:

- a. forming an insulating layer on a semiconductor substrate;
- b. forming a layer of a semiconductor material on said insulating layer;

- c. patterning said layer of a semiconductor material to define a plurality of islands of said semiconductor material on said on said insulating layer;
- d. doping said plurality of islands of said semiconductor material with dopants to form a plurality of diodes therefrom;
- e. depositing a layer of metal on exposed surfaces of said plurality of islands of semiconductor material and of said insulating material;
- f. patterning the layer of metal to define a plurality of resonant annular ring elements, each resonant annular ring element having one or more openings therein with one of said diodes being associated with each one of said one or more openings and wherein portions of the resonant annular ring element on each side of said one or more openings are in ohmic contact with the diode associated with said opening.

20. The method of claim **19** further including patterning said layer of insulating material to expose portions of the semiconductor substrate under said layer of insulating material, doping the exposed portions of the semiconductor substrate to define bias lines therein, the bias lines in the semiconductor substrate ohmically contacting either the diodes or metal adjacent the diodes whereby voltage applied to said bias lines may be utilized, in use, to control said diodes.

21. An optical beam steering device using tunable optical metamaterial in which a free-space optical beam is coupled into one portion of a plane of the optical metamaterial and subsequently steered out in controllable azimuthal and elevational directions from a different portion of said plane of optical metamaterial.

22. The optical beam steering device of claim **21** wherein the tunable optical metamaterial comprises:

- a two dimensional array of resonant annular ring elements; and
- a plurality of voltage controllable electrical tuning elements disposed in or adjacent openings in each of said ring elements, each of said voltage controllable electrical tuning element ohmically contacting portions of only one of said ring elements.

23. A tunable optical metamaterial comprising a two dimensional array of resonant metallic elements with a voltage controllable electrical tuning element disposed within each element or disposed between adjacent elements in said array, each resonant metallic element in said array being resonant at optical frequencies, and voltage controllable electrical tuning elements comprising highly doped semiconductor tunnel diodes, or devices utilizing channel conductance of the charge accumulation layer at a semiconductor/insulator interface of a metal-insulator-semiconductor structure, or nanoelectromechanical capacitors.

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